



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Voluntary Report - public distribution

Date: 8/22/2002

GAIN Report #IT2006

Italy

Livestock and Products

Mad Cow Disease - Update 2002

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Report Highlights:

Includes PSD changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Rome [IT1], IT

Blue Tongue disease threatens livestock trade.

According to the Ministry of Health , the total number of BSE cases in Italy has risen to 61. The last case was a 7 year old Holstein Friesian cow, found in Emilia-Romagna Region, in the North of Italy.

Since the beginning of the 2001, 693,000 BSE tests were made in Italy. All animals over 24 months old now undergo BSE testing prior to slaughter. According to a BSE investigation by the Food Adulteration Section of Carabinieri, 666 violations were found out of 1234 checks recently made in farms, slaughterhouses, meat plants and butcher shops. Major violations were absence of health certification, illegal or incorrect certification, hygiene and health deficiencies, illegal slaughtering.

Carabinieri reported 357 persons, sequestered 11 tons of meat and 6,222 heads of cattle, and seized 26 slaughterhouses.

Italy is also battling an outbreak of blue tongue disease since May 2001. The outbreak arose in Sardinia and spread in many other regions in Central and Southern Italy. The Italian Government has halted sheep and bovine trade in affected regions, and they have begun a vaccination program. Bovines are Blue Tongue healthy carrier. The mortality rate varies with the strain of virus. More than 500,000 sheep died in Sardinia, the most affected region, since the beginning of the outbreak. The disease does not threaten humans.

The European Union Commission contested subsidies the Italian Government provides to affected breeders. For sheep and goats that were killed because of Blue Tongue farmers were paid at market price. For bovines that are detained in farm because they are Blue Tongue healthy carriers, the Italian Government set subsidies that vary from 51.64 Euros to 180.75 Euros, depending on cattle age. According to Brussels the Blue Tongue outbreak does not represent an emergency and no emergency funds can be provided to growers.